



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

GCD NEWSLETTER

Volume 11, Number 1, February 2025

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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NEWS FROM THE STATE CAPITOL

by Claudia Browner

On January 13, 2025, state leaders, dignitaries, and members of the public gathered at the state capitol in Jefferson City to witness the inauguration of Governor Mike Kehoe as Missouri's 58th governor and to hear his inaugural speech. Alongside the new governor, the following elected officials took their oaths of office: Attorney General Andrew Bailey, State Treasurer Vivek Malek, Secretary of State Denny Hoskins, and Lieutenant Governor David Wasinger.

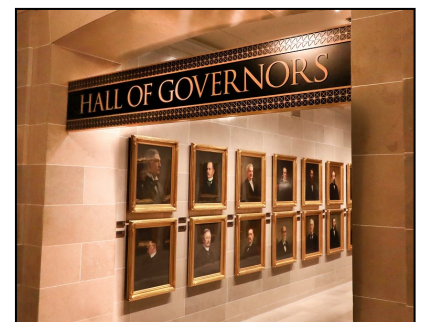


After the inauguration ceremony, a promenade of the Clydesdales escorted the new governor to the Governor's Mansion, where he greeted the public.

On January 28, Governor Kehoe delivered his first State of the State address, outlining his administration's priorities and budget recommendations. If you missed the address, you can watch the recording at <https://www.mo.gov/live> or read the transcript at <https://governor.mo.gov/press-releases/archive/securing-missouris-future-governor-kehoe-delivers-first-state-state-address>.

If you are planning a visit the capitol during the legislative session or at any other time of year, be sure to explore the newly opened [Hall of Governors](#), which features portraits and historical information about the leaders who have shaped Missouri's history and identity. This exhibit includes accessible elements, such as QR codes linking to websites with detailed information about each governor.

Before you plan a visit to the capitol, you may want to check out the [Capitol Access Guide](#) for information on accessibility features and accommodations within the building. The guide has recently been updated to include details about the accessibility features of the Hall of Governors, as well as an accessible restroom equipped with a Hoyer lift available on the basement level of the capitol building.



MISSOURI SENATOR LEADS EFFORT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO DISABILITY RESOURCES

by Reece Ellis

Americans with disabilities will soon have an easier way to connect with vital services thanks to the *Think Differently Database Act*, recently signed into law by President Joe Biden. Spearheaded by Missouri Senator Eric Schmitt, the law requires the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to create a national clearinghouse of resources for individuals with disabilities, their families, and caregivers.

The Think Differently Database Act or H.R. 670 was introduced in the United States House of Representatives by former Rep. Marc Molinaro of New York on January 31, 2023. It was passed by a voice vote in the House on December 17, 2024, passed by Unanimous Consent in the United States Senate on December 21, and finally signed into law by the now former President on January 4, 2025.

The website, which will launch within three years, will be designed to empower users and serve as a centralized hub for information. The platform will provide details on Medicaid-based long-term support services, health care, mental health care, and other community-based resources. A key feature of the website will be its zip code search function, allowing individuals to locate resources specific to their geographic area.

Schmitt, who co-sponsored the bipartisan measure along with Sen. Jon Ossoff of Georgia, cited his son Stephen as his motivation for fighting to improve access to resources. "I first entered public service because of my son Stephen, and fighting for individuals with disabilities has always been a top priority for me. I'm extremely proud that this critical piece of legislation was signed into law, but my efforts to improve the lives of those with disabilities will continue," Schmitt said.

The Think Differently Database Act is part of a broader effort to improve accessibility and inclusion. In addition to this legislation, President Biden also recently signed another bipartisan bill—the *Think Differently Transportation Act* to improve accessibility at Amtrak stations and federal buildings.

To read the *Think Differently Database Act* visit: [Text - H.R.670 - 118th Congress \(2023-2024\): Think Differently Database Act](#)

To read the *Think Differently Transportation Act* visit: [Text - S.4107 - 118th Congress \(2023-2024\): Think Differently Transportation Act](#)

BRaille LITERACY MONTH: CELEBRATING ACCESSIBILITY

by Reece Ellis

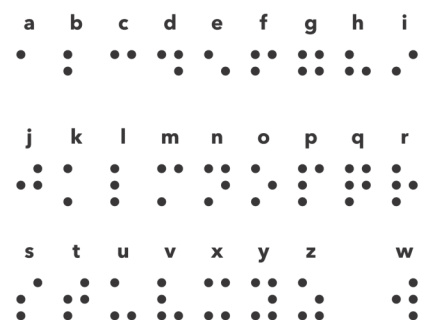
Each January, we celebrate Braille Literacy Month to honor the significance of braille in providing individuals who are blind and visually impaired with independence and literacy. The month coincides with World Braille Day, observed annually on January 4 to honor the birthday of Louis Braille, who invented the tactile code at just 15 years old back in 1824.

Although braille is often associated exclusively with blindness, it serves a wide range of individuals, including those with low vision, dual sensory loss, or multiple disabilities. Braille is made up of six raised dots that form combinations to represent letters, punctuation, and even scientific and musical symbols. It's not a language, but a code that can be adapted to many languages, including but not limited to English, Spanish, and Mandarin, making it a versatile tool for literacy worldwide.

According to the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) — in the 1960s, nearly 50% of blind individuals in the U.S. were braille users. Today, that number has dropped to less than 10%, largely due to technological advancements like screen readers and voice recognition software. Although technology has provided new tools for accessibility, braille remains essential for those who rely on it to read, write, and navigate their environments.

Let's continue to recognize the legacy of Louis Braille and commit to fostering accessibility and awareness in our communities.

The braille alphabet



DISABILITY RELATED LEGISLATIVE NEWS

by Laura Mueth

The legislative session has begun. Over 250 bills impacting people with disabilities in some manner have already been introduced between the House of Representatives and the Senate. To stay updated on the progress of disability related bills in Missouri, you can sign up to receive the weekly [Legislative Update](#) newsletter.

[Senator Mike Moon](#) proposed a rule change for the Senate which would require the proceedings in the Senate Chamber to be livestreamed. This is something various disability organizations are happy to see being pursued because it would lead to increased accessibility for those with disabilities.

If you would like to advocate on this issue or one of the disability related bills, but are not sure where to start, you are invited to register for one of the remaining two [Legislative Education Project webinars](#) to learn how to discuss issues with legislators, among other topics. The upcoming webinar dates are February 27, 2025, at 7:00-8:30 PM and March 13, 2025, at 1:00-2:30 PM. Please complete the [LEP webinars registration form](#) to register.

You could also participate in [Disability Rights Legislative Day](#) on Wednesday, February 26 at the Capitol in Jefferson City to join people with disabilities and advocates from throughout the state in speaking to legislators. While specific topics will be the focus for the rally, you can use your time meeting with legislators to discuss any issues important to you.

There are TWO great leadership opportunities for self-advocates at DRLD!

Access Team: This group of leaders will receive extra-training for DRLD. They will be able to help others attending that day find their legislators and navigate the day. There will also be the potential for appointments with state officials.

Apply for the Access Team at <https://drlld.org/events/access-team/>

Rally Speakers: This is the heart and soul of DRLD. Hundreds of people gather in-person and online to create power and momentum for the day's advocacy. Speakers will get 2-3 minutes to speak and receive training and support from DRLD coalition members. The themes this year are **Access to Services, Employment and Transportation**.

Apply to be a Rally Speaker at <https://drlld.org/events/rally-speaker/>

Applications for both positions are due on **Tuesday, February 4th** at 5pm! Apply Today!

If you are unable to come to Jefferson City on February 26, you will be able to watch a live-stream of the rally in the Capitol Rotunda from 11:15-12:15pm.

You may also consider scheduling an appointment to meet with a legislator in your community during the legislative spring break from March 14 to March 21 when legislators are back in their districts instead of being in the Capitol.

More information about Disability Rights Legislative Day is available at drlld.org



APPLY NOW FOR THE 21ST MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Reece Ellis

Applications are still open for the 2025 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF)! This unique, weeklong leadership experience will take place July 15–19, 2025, on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia.



MO-YLF is designed to empower high school students with disabilities (ages 16–21) to become confident leaders and advocates in their communities. Each year, approximately 30 delegates from across Missouri come together to:

- Build Leadership Skills through workshops on self-advocacy, goal-setting, and self-determination.
- Explore Disability Rights and Culture with peers and mentors who share lived experiences.
- Experience Civic Engagement by participating in a mock legislative session and visiting the state Capitol.
- Connect with Community through social activities like a talent show, adaptive sports, and more.

MO-YLF provides a life-changing opportunity for young people to prepare for success in education, employment, and independent living—all in a supportive, inclusive environment. Thanks to our generous sponsors, the program is offered at no cost to delegates. Applications are due by March 31, 2025. For more details or to apply, visit www.disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf.

MO-YLF IS OFFERING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!

It takes a great team of dedicated volunteers and staff members to facilitate the MO-YLF! We are looking for individuals who can contribute to this empowering program and make a positive impact on the lives of young leaders with disabilities. Your role as a staff member or volunteer will involve guiding and supporting participants and creating an inclusive and empowering atmosphere. We welcome MO-YLF alumni and other interested individuals (staff from independent living centers, disability organizations, college students, or teachers) to apply as staff to support, lead and mentor the delegates! This is a great opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young individuals with disabilities while growing professionally.

Apply now at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf/volunteer.htm>.

If you have any questions about the GCD's youth programs, please contact Reece Ellis at reece.ellis@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600. Please help us share this exciting leadership training opportunity with students, parents, teachers, and colleagues!

MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM INFORMATIONAL WEBINARS

by Reece Ellis

Are you interested in learning more about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum?

Join us for an informational webinar

REGISTER NOW



February 6, 2025
March 11, 2025

5:00 - 6:00 PM
2:30 - 3:30 PM



Register at
tinyurl.com/moylf-webinars

The Governor's Council on Disability is offering two more free informational webinars for the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF).

Each webinar will include detailed information on what takes place during MO-YLF, what the benefits are for a student to attend, and information on the application process.

All prospective delegates, educators, service providers, and families are welcome to register and attend! Registration is required to attend.

The next webinar will be offered on Thursday, February 6, 2025, from 5:00-6:00 PM

Please complete the Webinar Registration Form at: <https://tinyurl.com/moylf-webinars>

BEYOND BLACK HISTORY MONTH: THE DISABILITY RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

by Kim Hicks, Office of Equal Opportunity

Celebrating Black History Month and the Disability Rights Movement recognizes and acknowledges the efforts and sacrifices of countless activists and organizations that have fought for equal opportunities, social acceptance, and systemic change. This highlights the importance of inclusion and the necessity of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of ability or race, have the opportunity to participate fully in their communities. Although distinct in their focuses, the civil rights movement and the disability rights movement share a deep connection based on the universal pursuit of equality, dignity, and justice. These movements have challenged discriminatory practices and aimed for a more inclusive society for marginalized groups. Understanding their intersections provides valuable insights into how social movements can inspire and bolster one another and promote fundamental human rights.

The civil rights movement was a social and political movement in the U.S. during the 1950s and 1960s. Its goals were to end racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans. The movement sought to secure legal protection of citizenship rights as outlined in the U.S. Constitution and equal access to education, jobs, and public services through nonviolent protest and legal action. This was a pivotal period in history, marked by the struggle for racial equality and justice. Activists worked tirelessly to challenge segregation and advocate for the rights of African Americans. Key figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Thurgood Marshall emerged as passionate leaders. Black-owned restaurants, such as the Club from Nowhere and Paschal's, supplied food, meeting facilities for civil rights activities and donated to fundraising efforts. The unwavering commitment of these dedicated advocates exemplifies the enduring human spirit and highlights the transformative impact of collective action.



The achievement of landmark legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 transformed the legal landscape and laid the groundwork for ongoing discussions about race and justice. In the wake of the civil rights movement, there was a growing recognition of the importance of celebrating black history and honoring the memory and sacrifices of dedicated advocates. This movement paved the way for the creation of Black History Month by raising national awareness of the need to celebrate African American history. What began as Negro History Week grew in popularity and culminated in Black History Month, a month-long national observance. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month.

Inspired by the civil rights movement, the disability rights movement emphasized accessibility, social inclusion, and the empowerment of persons with disabilities to take control over decisions affecting their own lives. Advocates for disability rights organized sit-ins, drawing attention to systemic discrimination and barriers faced by people with disabilities.

The Capitol Crawl was a pivotal event in the disability rights movement. Individuals with disabilities crawled up the steps of the U.S. Capitol on March 12, 1990, demonstrating the challenges faced by people with disabilities, particularly the inaccessibility of public spaces. The event received widespread media coverage, raised public awareness and support for disability rights, and is credited as the tipping point that led to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26, 1990. The ADA promotes equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in employment, public services, and access to public spaces.

(Continued on page 6)

Beyond Black History Month

(Continued from page 5)

At the intersection of race and disability are the unique experiences of individuals who navigate both racial and disability identities and their struggle against systemic barriers and discrimination. No one symbolizes the intersectional nature of race and disability more than Brad Lomax. Diagnosed as a teenager with multiple sclerosis and a wheelchair user, Lomax was a cross-sectional movement leader and advocate, combining the resources of the civil rights movement with the disability rights movement.

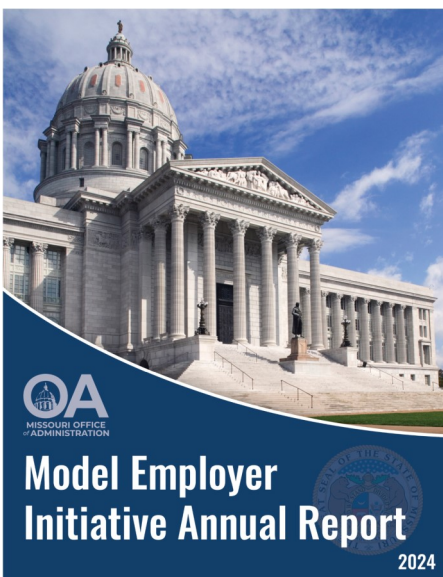
Brad Lomax and other civil rights activists answered the call to action to support disability protestors during the 504 Sit-in. On April 5, 1977, a group of individuals with disabilities conducted a sit-in protest at the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) building in San Francisco to advocate for accessibility and accommodations for people with disabilities. Organized by disability activists Judith Heumann, Kitty Cone, and Mary Jane Owen, this protest addressed the government's failure to enforce Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Spanning 25 days, the 504 Sit-in involved over 150 individuals who refused to leave, making it the longest sit-in at a federal building to date. The protestors endured hunger, cut phone lines, and no medicine or water. The protestors received support from a range of organizations and individuals, such as labor unions, religious groups, and civil rights organizations. Key supporters of the 504 protests included the Glide Memorial Church, Delancey Street, United Farm Workers, Black Panther Party, Gray Panthers, Salvation Army, and many others. This collaboration marks the 504 Sit-in as a significant milestone in cross-movement organizing.

Black history illuminates the struggle for civil rights and cultural recognition, while disability history advocates for accessibility and inclusion in society. By exploring these interconnected narratives, we better understand the challenges faced by people at the crossroads of race and disability and the contributions they have made and continue to make to society.

Black history is forever linked with disability history, as both are interconnected chapters in the broader social justice narrative. By understanding their links, we can appreciate the collective action and the enduring fight for a society where all individuals can thrive without prejudice or limitation.

2024 Model Employer Initiative Annual Report

by Claudia Browner



In 2019, former Governor Parson issued Executive Order 19-16 directing the State of Missouri to put forth best efforts to eliminate the disparity in the percentage of individuals with disabilities of working age in the population and the percentage of employees with disabilities in the State workforce and set annual goals for continuing to increase the percentage of individuals with disabilities in the State workforce.

Members of the Office of Administration's Division of Personnel, Office of Equal Opportunity, and the Governor's Council on Disability collaborate to assist executive agencies in carrying out the directives of EO19-16.

The [2024 Model Employer Initiative Annual Report](#) provides data and efforts taken by the executive branch to implement this initiative and Model Employer legislation, Section 37.980.1 RSMo.

More information about the Model Employer Initiative is available at <https://disability.mo.gov/model-employer.htm>

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Steve Ahrens, Jefferson City
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Jason Schott, Ste. Genevieve
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Administrative Support Professional

STATE OF MISSOURI TALENT SHOWCASE

The upcoming State of Missouri's Talent Showcase is thoughtfully tailored for job seekers with disabilities to proudly display their job readiness. Each job seeker will have their own designated table space, providing an excellent opportunity to highlight their experiences, skills, and abilities. It's a fantastic chance to stand out and make a lasting impression!

Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2025

Time: 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Location: McClung Park Pavilion, 930 McClung Park Drive, Jefferson City, MO 65101



State of Missouri recruiters from various departments will circulate among booths and connect with job seekers whose skills and abilities align with their needs. Job seekers can participate in mock interviews and receive professional resume support. This event reflects our commitment to ensure all job seekers can successfully and effectively engage with recruiters at the State of Missouri. Secure a spot today as space is limited.

For registration or questions, please contact HiringEvents@oa.mo.gov

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

February 23, 2025

[Disability Awareness Convention](#), hosted by The Arya Foundation, Chesterfield

February 26, 2025

[Disability Rights Legislative Day](#), Jefferson City

May 5—7, 2025

[Virtual ADA Symposium](#)

May 28—30, 2025

[Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) Conference](#), Lake of the Ozarks

June 15—18, 2025

[National ADA Symposium](#), Atlanta, Georgia

July 15-19, 2025

[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#), Columbia

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.

STAY CONNECTED

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[GCD LinkTree](#)



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL
ON DISABILITY

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

GCD NEWSLETTER

Volume 11, Number 2, April 2025

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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Missouri Youth Leadership
Forum (MO-YLF) Application—
Deadline Extended to April 15!

SELF-ADVOCACY
DISABILITY PRIDE
INDEPENDENT LIVING
EMPLOYMENT SKILLS
HIGHER EDUCATION
LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY
MENTORSHIP
COMMUNITY SERVICE
AND MORE!

GCD ANNOUNCES INCLUSION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNERS

by Claudia Browner

Each year, the Governor's Council on Disability recognizes leaders in Inclusion and Youth Leadership through its annual [Inclusion Award](#) and [Youth Leadership Award](#) programs to raise awareness about the importance of inclusion and equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities in all aspects of community living, and to recognize and honor the accomplishments of the award recipients.

Inclusion Award honorees are chosen for their exceptional, proactive, and innovative measures to integrate and mainstream people with disabilities into their programs, activities, and operations. The Youth Leadership Award celebrates outstanding Missouri youths (aged 16-26) with a disability who exhibit exemplary leadership by making a positive impact on their communities.

The 2024 winners are:

Inclusion Award— True Manufacturing, O'Fallon

True Manufacturing showcases leadership in disability inclusion through its collaboration with the BCI Skills Center. Over five years, the company has created a job training program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, hiring 51 graduates with a 76% retention rate. Their inclusive hiring practices have strengthened their workforce and earned the 2024 Talent Pipeline Project of the Year award, showcasing the impact of equal opportunities in employment.

Inclusion Award Honorable Mention— Kit Brewer, Project CU, Inc., St. Louis

For over 25 years, Kit Brewer has championed disability employment as the Executive Director of Project CU, Inc., creating inclusive job opportunities for individuals with various disabilities. Project CU serves over 100 individuals by integrating employment services, accommodations, and advocacy for lasting success. His mentorship empowers employees, strengthens Missouri's workforce and establishes standards for disability employment.

Youth Leadership Award— Arabel StandingBear, Neosho

Arabel StandingBear is a passionate advocate for individuals with disabilities and rare diseases, motivated by her own experience. She engages in advocacy at local, state, and national levels, collaborating with legislators on initiatives like a childcare bill for families with disabilities. Her notable achievements include acting in "Killers of the Flower Moon," working with the Osage Nation Tribe, and contributing to a viral blood donation campaign. Arabel's leadership and advocacy embody the spirit of the Youth Leadership Award.

Youth Leadership Award Honorable Mention—Lucas Fritsche, Perryville

Lucas Fritsche has significantly impacted his community through his commitment to inclusion and accessibility. His journey began when he noticed a friend being unable to enjoy recess due to an inaccessible playground. This prompted him to advocate for an inclusive playground, leading to the Lucas and Friends Backyard Adventure project, which opened in 2021. Lucas's efforts have transformed his community and exemplify how young voices can drive meaningful change.

The awards will be presented to the winners at the Missouri Rehabilitation Association (MRA) Conference in Lake Ozark on May 29, 2025.

Read the full news release at <https://oa.mo.gov/commissioners-office/news>

For more information about the awards programs and this year's winners and nominees, visit our [Inclusion Awards](#) and [Youth Leadership Awards](#) websites.

DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY WRAP UP

by Laura Mueth

[Disability Rights Legislative Day](#) (DRLD) 2025 was held on Wednesday, February 26. Over 500 people attended either in-person at the Capitol or virtually. **Access for All** was the theme for the day.

Transportation, employment, and access to services were the focus of the day. In a departure from previous years, the main speakers were all individuals with disabilities, family members, or service providers rather than just legislators. Governor Kehoe who was introduced by Representative Stinnett attended his first DRLD as governor.

Treasurer Malek discussed [Missouri's ABLE Program](#). United States Senator Schmitt spoke via recorded video. Main speakers Duane Gruis, Erin Wiercinski, Nancy Loston, Saffron Weigand-Buckley, Michael Gentry, Jennifer "Allie" Friedrich, Erin Bowe, Julia Chaney Faughn, Cheri Montgomery, Miriam Galan, and Kayla Palmer shared their experiences and thoughts on one of the topics or on advocacy.



Representative Stinnett brought the event to the attention of her legislative colleagues by introducing members of the Access Team on the floor of the House of Representatives. The Access team was available to assist individuals with navigating the Capitol and meeting with legislators.

Due to the event being rescheduled from its original date, several advocacy groups that had not previously participated were able to join, because their own advocacy events were scheduled for the same day. There were also resource tables available for participants to visit. These contained materials concerning advocacy, leadership, employment, resources, along with information on DRLD.

Special thanks go to the emcee, Michkeal Cross and the planning committee for their contributions to make the day a success.

VOLUNTEER APPLICATIONS FOR MO-YLF OPEN UNTIL APRIL 15

by Reece Ellis



MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

July 14-19, 2025
at MU in Columbia



Volunteer Staff Needed!
Apply by April 15!

The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is a leadership program designed for young adults with disabilities to learn from successful leaders and role models.

Apply for one of our volunteer staff positions to support the youth participants at this week-long, empowering program on MU Campus!

Make a positive difference in the lives of young adults with disabilities and gain professional leadership experience and connections.

Learn more about this exciting volunteer opportunity at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf>



Questions?  573-751-2600  gcd@oa.mo.gov

The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) will hold its 2025 session from July 15—19, 2025 at the University of Missouri in Columbia. We are currently seeking dedicated volunteers to help make this transformative experience possible for high school students with disabilities (ages 16-21). Volunteer opportunities remain open until April 15, 2025.

MO-YLF volunteers play an essential role in creating this life-changing program. Responsibilities include assisting with delegate orientation and registration, providing mentorship, supporting daily activities, and helping maintain a safe, supportive environment where students can develop leadership skills, build confidence, and learn about disability advocacy and transition to adulthood.

Volunteer-staff are asked to arrive on July 14 for orientation and preparation before delegates arrive on July 15. This preparation ensures volunteers are fully ready to support participants throughout the forum. For more information about volunteer roles or to apply, please visit our website at disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf/volunteer.htm.

If you or your organization would like to help us make this great program possible, please contact GCD for more information by email at reece.ellis@oa.mo.gov or by calling our office at (573) 751-2600.

MOCIL LEGISLATIVE DAY 2025

by Claudia Browner

The [Missouri Centers for Independent Living](#) (MOCIL) association hosted its MOCIL Legislative Day 2025 on March 25 at the Missouri State Capitol. The theme of the event was **Opportunities for All** in celebration of the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Advocates from Missouri's 21 Centers for Independent Living (CILs) traveled to the capitol to meet with legislators to discuss the importance of services the CILs provide to support individuals with disabilities living in their communities. Hundreds of people then gathered in the capitol rotunda to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the ADA and hear from elected officials, legislators, and individuals living with disabilities about the importance of this civil rights legislation and the work that needs to continue to advance disability rights and ensure equal opportunities for all.

Governor Kehoe presented a proclamation to MOCIL President Patrick Lee in recognition of the 35th ADA anniversary. Other speakers included Missouri State Treasurer Vivik Malek, Representative Stinnett and Senator Williams, Elizabeth Rajchart, Kyle Auxier, Tammy Teel, and Jessica Podesva. The Kapital Kicks Jazz Band provided a musical performance.



To learn more about the services the Centers for Independent Living provide and find a CIL near you, visit mocil.org

GCD NDEAM POSTER CONTEST OPEN NOW

by Claudia Browner

Governor's Council on Disability

POSTER CONTEST

 **SUBMIT ENTRIES BY August 15, 2025**

CALLING ALL MISSOURI ARTISTS

Submit your artwork for a chance to be featured on the Governor's Council on Disability's 2025 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Poster

The theme for the artwork contest is the **35th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

ADA35

FULL PARTICIPATION - EQUAL OPPORTUNITY - INDEPENDENT LIVING - ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY





LEARN HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE AT disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest

QUESTIONS? CALL 573-751-2600



The Governor's Council on Disability hosts a poster contest each year to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October.

All Missouri residents are invited and encouraged to submit original artwork to spark conversation and raise awareness about the importance of equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The winning artwork will be featured on the 2025 awareness poster.

This year, we invite the artists to incorporate the **35th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** as a theme for their artwork. The ADA prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantees individuals with disabilities equal opportunities and full participation in all aspects of society, including employment.

Start your artwork now and submit your entries prior to the August 31 deadline for a chance to be the winner!

For more details and the entry form, visit disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: HOW TO FILE A DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT

by Reece Ellis

At the Governor's Council on Disability, we frequently receive questions about how to address disability discrimination. While we **don't** handle complaints directly and cannot provide legal advice, we want to ensure Missourians know their rights and options under federal law. If you've experienced discrimination in employment, air travel, housing, or public accommodations, here's what you need to know about filing a formal complaint.

Issues at Work or in Applying for a Job: **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)**

- What to file: A Charge of Discrimination is a signed statement asserting that an employer, union or labor organization engaged in employment discrimination. It requests EEOC to take remedial action. If you believe that you have been discriminated against at work because of your race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information, [you can file a Charge of Discrimination](#).
- Deadline: File within **180 days** of the incident (or **300 days** if your state has a Fair Employment Practices Agency). Missouri's is the [Missouri Commission on Human Rights](#)
- How to file: Submit online at eeoc.gov or visit the EEOC's St. Louis or Kansas City offices. An individual, organization, or agency may file a charge on behalf of another person in order to protect the aggrieved person's identity.



Issues involving a Specific Airline: **Department of Transportation**

- How to file: Use [DOT's online form](#) or call the disability hotline: **1-800-778-4838**. DOT also accepts completed paper complaints at – ATTN: C-75-D U.S. Department of Transportation 1200 New Jersey Ave, SE Washington, D.C. 20590
- Act fast: File complaints **soon after the incident**; first try resolving directly with the airline.
- Note: The Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA, 49 U.S.C. 41705) prohibits discrimination by U.S. and foreign air carriers based on physical or mental disability. DOT can't investigate ADA violations at airports (those typically go to the FAA or DOJ).



Issues involving Housing: **Department of Housing and Urban Development**

- Covered by: The Fair Housing Act protects against discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, familial status. Discrimination in renting or buying a home, getting a mortgage, seeking housing assistance, or engaging in other housing-related activities is illegal. Property owners, property managers, developers, real estate agents, mortgage lenders, homeowners associations, insurance providers, and others who affect housing opportunities can be held liable.
- Deadline: File within 1 year of the incident.
- How to file: [Submit online](#) at or call 1-800-669-9777 (TTY: 1-800-927-9275). Protection: Retaliation for filing a complaint is illegal. If you believe you have experienced retaliation, you can report housing discrimination.



Other Complaints: **Department of Justice**

- Covers: If you believe that you or someone else was discriminated against based on a disability, you can file an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complaint against a state government or local government, such as a public hospital, public school, or other state/local program. Additionally, you can also file a complaint against a private business that serves the public, such as a restaurant, doctor's office, shop, or hotel.
- Deadline: In general, complaints under Title II of the ADA must be filed with the DOJ within 180 days of the date of the alleged discrimination.
- How to file: File a complaint by submitting a report on the Department of Justice's [Civil Rights Division website](#) or Fill out and send the paper ADA Complaint Form ([Regular Format](#) | [Large Format](#)) or a letter containing the same information, to U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20530



APRIL IS PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

by Kim Hicks, Office of Equal Opportunity

James Parkinson was a surgeon and political activist who wrote several medical journals that demonstrated his passion for public health. He fought for legal protection for those living with mental health conditions, their doctors, and their families.

He is best known for his 66-page booklet, published in 1817, which secured his legacy in the history of medicine, titled *An Essay on the Shaking Palsy*. In this ground-breaking book, he shared insights on this condition, relying solely on his observations of just six individuals. In the first chapter, he starts with a description of Shaking Palsy, which closely resembles modern Parkinson's disease: "Involuntary tremulous motion, with lessened muscular power, in parts not in action and even when supported; with a propensity to bend the trunk forwards, and to pass from a walking to a running pace: the senses and intellects being uninjured."

Dr. Parkinson was the first person to describe individuals with symptoms of the condition that now bears his name.

Parkinson's disease mainly affects movement and is marked by symptoms such as tremors, stiffness, and balance problems.

According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Parkinson's disease varies from person to person; it is currently the fastest-growing brain disorder and is progressing even more rapidly than anticipated. This variability not only makes it difficult for doctors to diagnose and treat but also implies that patients can experience a wide range of symptoms that may change and worsen over time. This situation highlights the urgent need for increased awareness, research, and innovative treatment options to address this growing health condition. The exact cause remains unknown, but it is believed to be a combination of genetic and environmental factors. There is currently no known cure, but various treatment options, including medications and therapies, are available to help manage symptoms.

In April, various awareness initiatives will be launched, including informational campaigns, community events, and fundraising activities designed to support research for better treatments and potential cures. Organizations such as the Parkinson's Foundation and the Michael J. Fox Foundation provide valuable resources to patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals.

Individuals can contribute to Parkinson's Awareness Month by donating to research initiatives, volunteering at fundraising events, participating in life-changing research efforts, advocating for additional funding, and sharing information on social media. If you want to get involved but are unsure how to help, you can download [The Michael J. Fox Foundation's Advocacy Toolkit](#) for tips.

If you or someone you care about needs local support, you can visit the [Parkinson's Foundation Missouri Support Groups](#). These support groups allow people to share support and coping skills related to Parkinson's.

Parkinson's Awareness Month focuses on raising awareness, fostering understanding, and encouraging action to support individuals impacted by Parkinson's disease. Together, we can strive toward a future with improved treatments and a brighter outlook for the Parkinson's community.



BLIND AND LOW VISION RESOURCES

by Claudia Browner

Established in 2024, the [Blind and Low Vision Community of Missouri](#) is an organization that assists people who are blind or have low vision through monthly peer support calls, social activities, and other programs to unite and improve the lives of individuals with visual impairments. Find out more or join as a member at blindlowvisionmo.org/organization-history-blind-support

ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES FOR WORK, HOME AND PLAY

(Source: National ADA Network)

Following are a number of resources for assistive apps and technology for the blind and low vision community. *These resources are intended as educational information and are not an endorsement of any particular product or service by the Governor's Council on Disability. The links point to the Apple App Store, however, these apps are also available through the Google Play App Store.*

APPS FOR WORK



Meta View with the Ray-Ban Meta View Smart Glasses: Free app that manages your Meta Smart Glasses and allows you to set up and control voice control features, manage photos, music services, and working with other apps.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/meta-view/id1558240027>



BARD mobile: Free app from the National Library Services for the blind and print disabled. Search for over 150,000 books and magazines to download and play on your mobile device.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/bard-mobile/id705229586>



Seeing AI: This free app opens up the world to people who are blind or low vision. The app can recognize currency, read text, read product codes, identify faces, and more. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/seeing-ai/id999062298>



Microsoft Teams: Free app for collaborating with co-workers, family, or friends. Join audio and video calls, set up meetings, and chat one-on-one or to a large group.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/microsoft-teams/id1113153706>



Zoom: Free app that allows people to conduct meetings and share content and documents.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/zoom-one-platform-to-connect/id546505307>



EyeNote: Free app developed for people who are blind or low vision by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) to identify U.S. bank notes. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/eyenote/id405336354>

APPS FOR HOME



Comerica Mobile Banking: Free app to manage your bank accounts and transactions.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/comerica-mobile-banking/id403598968>



Aira Explorer: The free Aira app provides on-demand remote visual interpreting for the blind and low vision community to enhance independence. Connect with a trained visual interpreter to accomplish a large number of tasks. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/aira-explorer/id1590186766>



Honeywell Total Connect Comfort: This free app allows you to connect to your thermostat to change home heating and cooling temperatures, create a schedule, view humidifier and dehumidifier settings, and more.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/total-connect-comfort/id469517819>



Lyft: Free app that allows you to book a ride, see your cost up front, set up a payment method, know when your ride is arriving, and more. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/lyft/id529379082>

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6) **BLIND AND LOW VISION RESOURCES**



Uber: Free ride sharing app that allows you to book a ride, know when your ride is arriving, know your up front costs, and more. This app works “alright” except for the issue with putting in “Other Amount” when tipping.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/uber-request-a-ride/id368677368>

APPS FOR FUN



Bookshare: Free app that allows people with print disabilities, blindness, low vision, and physical disabilities to read over one million books in audio, text, or braille. You can read best sellers, educational books, children’s books, and more. You need a subscription to Bookshare to download books. If you want to read braille books you will need a refreshable braille display.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/bookshare-reader/id1605201737>



Amazon Kindle: Free app that allows you to read Amazon books. I use this app, but the app does have some access issues. I had a book that I needed for a training at work that took my wife who is sighted to help me figure out how to access the book so I could move from chapter to chapter, read by letter, word, sentence, or line.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/amazon-kindle/id302584613>



Learning Ally: Free app gets access to human-read audio books from Learning Ally. Subscription required to download books.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/learning-ally-audiobooks/id1131235021>



Netflix: App that allows you to watch TV shows, Movies, and more. You can look up a movie or TV show to see if it has audio description right through the app. Netflix requires a month-to-month subscription.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/netflix/id363590051>



NFB Newsline: Free app that allows access to over 500 publications, TV listings, weather alerts, and retail ads. Designed for people who are blind or low vision. You need to be a Newsline subscriber to access the content.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/nfb-newsline-mobile/id530470425>



Merlin Bird ID: Free app that allows you to identify birds by their song, a photo, or get a list of birds for a particular geographic area. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/merlin-bird-id-by-cornell-lab/id773457673>



Voice Dream Reader: Free app that works with Voiceover to read aloud these formats PDF, plain text, MS Word, MS PowerPoint, RTF, and Google Docs. Built-in scanner to scan documents. Works with Bookshare books, audio books in Mp3, MP4, or zipped MP3 and EPUB eBooks.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/voice-dream-text-to-voice/id496177674>



Wiim Home: Free app that allows you to control your music services like Amazon music, Spotify, iTunes, Pandora, Deezer, Qobuz, and more. I use this device and the app to stream music to my vintage stereo equipment.

Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/wiim-home/id1573883295>

FEATURED APP



NaviLens and NaviLens GO: Free app to provide accessible wayfinding information for everybody. Provides directions and context information. NaviLens was designed specifically for people who are blind or have low vision to be able to access and locate information and interact with the environment around them. Link: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/navilens-go/id1313878412>

Learn more about NaviLens at navilens.com

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Steve Ahrens, Jefferson City
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Jason Schott, Ste. Genevieve
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Administrative Support Professional

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

April 29—May 1, 2025

[Charting the LifeCourse Showcase 2025](#), Kansas City

May 1, 2025

[Mental Health Champions Banquet](#), Jefferson City

May 5—7, 2025

[Virtual ADA Symposium](#)

May 12—13, 2025

[34th Annual Aging with Developmental Disabilities Conference](#), St. Charles

May 28, 2025

[Children and Youth in Disasters Conference](#), Jefferson City

May 28—30, 2025

[Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) Conference](#), Lake of the Ozarks

June 15—18, 2025

[National ADA Symposium](#), Atlanta, Georgia

June 25—27, 2025

[Transition Training Institute](#), Columbia

July 15—19, 2025

[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#), Columbia

July 24—25, 2025

[Missouri APSE Employment Summit](#), Columbia

August 24—26, 2025

[Real Voices, Real Choices Conference](#), Lake Ozark

If you know of additional events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



STAY CONNECTED

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[GCD LinkTree](#)



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL
ON DISABILITY

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

GCD NEWSLETTER

Volume 11, Number 3, June 2025

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD PRESENTS INCLUSION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARDS

by Claudia Browner

For over 30 years, the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) has presented the Inclusion Award and Youth Leadership Award to spotlight individuals and organizations who are creating greater access and opportunity for Missourians with disabilities—through innovation, advocacy, and a commitment to improving lives.

On May 29, the GCD recognized the 2024 Inclusion and Youth Leadership Award winners at the annual [Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) conference](#) at Lake Ozark. This statewide training conference brings together professionals to learn innovative ways to empower and support individuals with disabilities and was the perfect venue to honor and celebrate the achievements of the honorees.



The 2024 awards recipients were:

Inclusion Award Winner — True Manufacturing, O'Fallon

Inclusion Award Honorable Mention — Kit Brewer, Project CU, Inc., St. Louis

Youth Leadership Award Winner — Arabel StandingBear, Neosho

Youth Leadership Award Honorable Mention — Lucas Fritsche, Perryville

Congratulations to all of the award winners!

For more information about the awards programs and this year's winners and nominees, visit our [Inclusion Awards](#) and [Youth Leadership Awards](#) websites.

The Governor's Council on Disability accepts nominations for the annual awards programs each fall. If you know of an individual or organization who deserves recognition for their commitment to advancing disability inclusion and improving lives, I encourage you to participate by submitting a nomination. The nomination forms will be available online by October.

Photo: Kit Brewer, Lucas Fritsche, Arabel StandingBear, and True Manufacturing —Katie Anderson, Ken Talley, Matt Lucas

LEGISLATIVE SESSION ENDS—NEXT STEPS

by Laura Mueth

The 2025 legislative session is now over. It concluded a day earlier than scheduled, on Thursday, May 15. For bills that have been [Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed](#) by the General Assembly, the next step is consideration by Governor Kehoe. You can contact the Governor's Office to share your thoughts on the bills using the [contact form](#).

The final issue of the [Legislative Update](#) in July will include the bills impacting people with disabilities that were sent to the governor and the action he took on them. If he vetoes any bill, the House and Senate could attempt to override the veto during September's veto session.

The next few months are a time to look at successes of the session and consider what is important to you or your groups for next year. If you did not have the opportunity to share thoughts or a bill idea with a representative or senator this session, they can be contacted over the summer. If you had legislators who worked on your behalf on a particular bill you can take time now or over the summer to thank them for their efforts.



CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF THE ADA

by Claudia Browner



This year, we commemorate the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This significant civil rights legislation was enacted by President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990. The ADA ensures that individuals with disabilities have equal access and full participation in employment, government programs, communication, and public spaces. Although notable strides have been made towards access and inclusion, advocates for disability rights continue to provide policy recommendations to fully realize the ADA's potential in all aspects of community life.

Participate in the Americans with Disabilities Impact Survey: 2025

To honor the ADA's anniversary, the Southwest ADA Center, part of the National ADA Network, is seeking feedback from the disability community to evaluate the ADA's impact over the past 35 years. This input will help develop further technical assistance and policy recommendations for effective implementation of the legislation. You are invited to take part in the anonymous and voluntary Americans with Disabilities Impact Survey: 2025, available online at <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/8264936/ADA-Impact-Survey-2025>. For questions or assistance regarding the survey, please reach out to ADAimpact2025@gmail.com.

Join the Nationwide Recognition of the ADA

Disability advocates and organizations across the nation are celebrating the 35th anniversary of the ADA through social media campaigns, events, and festivities. If you're seeking inspiration to commemorate this significant milestone, visit adaanniversary.org for ideas and toolkits.

The Governor's Council on Disability acknowledges and honors the 35th anniversary of the ADA by reaffirming its commitment to advocating for the disability community. This is achieved through collaboration with stakeholders from disability organizations and state agencies to shape policies that promote the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities, as well as by offering outreach programs and hosting events aimed at raising disability awareness.

ARTISTS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN GCD POSTER CONTEST

by Claudia Browner

Each year, the Governor's Council on Disability organizes a poster contest to honor National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) in October.

All residents of Missouri are invited and encouraged to submit original artwork that sparks dialogue and raises awareness about the significance of equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The artwork selected as the winner will be showcased on the 2025 awareness poster.

In celebration of the 35th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the GCD invites artists to reflect this pivotal milestone in their creations.

The ADA prohibits discrimination based on disability and ensures that individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities and full participation in every facet of society, including the workforce.

Get started on your artwork now and submit your entries before the August 31 deadline for a chance to win!

For further details and to access the entry form, please visit disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest.

Governor's Council on
Disability

POSTER CONTEST



SUBMIT ENTRIES BY
August 15, 2025

CALLING ALL MISSOURI
ARTISTS



Submit your artwork for a chance to be featured on the Governor's Council on Disability's 2025 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Poster

The theme for the artwork contest is the **35th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

ADA35

FULL PARTICIPATION - EQUAL OPPORTUNITY -
INDEPENDENT LIVING - ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY



LEARN HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE AT
disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest

QUESTIONS? CALL
573-751-2600

THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM IS NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU

by Reece Ellis



There are 114 counties in Missouri, 554 school districts, and nearly 900,000 students — or about one in every seven people in our great state. Among them are young leaders with disabilities who have the potential to shape our communities for the better. Helping us find and support those future leaders is where you come in.

The [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum \(MO-YLF\)](https://disability.mo.gov/youth-leadership-forum) has always been a program built on community. Whether you're a parent, teacher, rehab specialist, transition coordinator, advocate, or alum, your outreach and encouragement are what connect us to the students who need this opportunity the most. This year, 20 delegates from across the state will join us in Columbia from July 15–19 for a life-changing week of leadership development, mentoring, disability history, career planning, and self-advocacy training.

We want to say thank you. Thank you to the families who trust us with their students, to the alumni who return each year to mentor the next generation, and to the community leaders and employers who donate their time to speak on panels and offer guidance.

Thank you to the organizations and agencies whose generous monetary and in-kind donations make it possible to run MO-YLF at no cost to students, ensuring equity and access for young people from both urban and rural areas. From accessible transportation to meals, overnight lodging, and supplies, this program runs entirely on the strength of our supporters. Your belief in our mission is what sustains it.

As we prepare to welcome this year's cohort, we are especially moved by the continued commitment of our alumni. Every team leader and facilitator this year is a YLF graduate. Their passion for giving back is proof of the long-term impact this program has in building confidence, community, and capacity for leadership.

Last year we celebrated 20 years of MO-YLF. With your support, we look forward to celebrating 25, 30, 40 years and beyond! To learn more about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, including how to support or sponsor, visit disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf

COLLEGE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

by Reece Ellis

Heading off to college is an exciting time, but it can also come with big changes especially when it comes to disability accommodations. If you're a high school student with an IEP or 504 Plan, it's important to know that the college accommodation process works very differently.

In high school, most accommodations are managed through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which guarantees access to services that support your success. But once you graduate, IDEA no longer applies. In college, accommodations are governed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. These laws protect your right to equal access, but not guaranteed outcomes.

Here's what that means:

- You must ask for accommodations. Colleges are not required to identify students with disabilities. You must self-identify and register with your school's disability services office if you need reasonable accommodations.
- You need documentation. Be prepared to submit recent documentation about your diagnosis and how it impacts you including any functional limitations.
- You are in charge. You, not your parents or guardians, must request accommodations and work directly with the disability services office.
- The process is collaborative. Once you register, disability office staff will work with you and your instructors to identify and implement reasonable accommodations that don't fundamentally change course requirements.

Common college accommodations include:

- Extended time on exams
- Note-taking support or access to class notes
- Priority registration
- Use of text-to-speech software or audiobooks
- Permission to record lectures
- Reduced course loads (though this may affect financial aid)
- Access to adaptive tech or assistive devices
- Accommodations in student housing

However, most services vary widely by school. While all colleges are legally required to offer accommodations that provide equal access, some colleges go beyond the basics by offering learning specialists, mentoring programs, or study skills support—sometimes at an extra cost. As you compare schools, be sure to ask detailed questions about what services are available and how to access them. Start early and don't be afraid to advocate for yourself. College comes with more freedom, but also more personal responsibility. Learning how to navigate this process now can make your transition smoother and your experience more successful.



CONNECTING WITH ADULT CHILDREN

by Kim Hicks, Office of Equal Opportunity

Currently, there is no universal guidebook for raising children. Many lessons can be learned through the tried-and-true method of trial and error. All parents experience ups and downs, good days and bad days. Mistakes are made, but so are memories.

You might have said out loud or to yourself, "This isn't what I imagined for myself." Perhaps you've thought, "I wish I hadn't said that." Maybe you even considered, "I wish I could do that over." Much of the growth for parents arises from mistakes yet given the hundreds or thousands of hiccups that occur in raising children, they will inevitably grow into adults, and as they mature, the dynamics of the parent-child relationship evolve. Although it's common to experience a sense of distance during this period, it's important to discover methods to sustain a strong connection.

Recognizing how personalities, needs, talents, and tendencies change over time offers valuable insight into nurturing a changing relationship, from offering advice to enjoying quality time together. Understanding their personalities and adjusting to their needs and communication styles is important. How that happens is up to each of us. But remember to keep it simple; don't overthink it, advises child/teen & family psychologist, parent coach, and author Jeffrey Bernstein, Ph.D.

Meet them where they are. Instead of inviting them to an activity you enjoy, participate in something they appreciate. This might involve going fishing, attending a football game, or relaxing while watching their favorite show.

Recognize their adulthood and their potential. Acknowledge that your child is now an adult and deserves autonomy and independence. Respect their opinions, choices, and lifestyle.

Respect their space and identity as young adults. Avoid placing undue expectations on them. Remember to be flexible during holidays and other special occasions, as they are entitled to make their own plans now.

They may have grown and become independent, but your words still hold great power. You possess the ability to encourage and uplift them. Avoid being judgmental or critical. Speak words of life that will inspire and elevate them. I hope you find ways to strengthen your connections with those you love.



HELEN KELLER DEAF-BLIND AWARENESS WEEK

by Lydia Olmsted

Deaf-Blind Awareness Week is observed during the last week of June each year, in honor of humanitarian, author, and educator Helen Keller, who was born on June 27, 1880. Being both deaf and blind, Keller's work significantly impacted the lives of other Deaf-Blind individuals. Established in 1984, Deaf-Blind Awareness Week aims to raise public awareness about individuals who have combined hearing and vision loss, to promote a better understanding of the challenges they face, and to celebrate their unique abilities and contributions to society.



Lydia Olmsted is a vital advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities, particularly those who are Deaf-Blind. As a student, Lydia became a powerful and respected voice for equal access, advocating for reasonable accommodations and demonstrating her passion and unwavering commitment to inclusion. Her work has garnered notable recognition, showcasing her exemplary contributions and steadfast commitment to the rights of people with disabilities. Lydia served as the keynote speaker for the State of Missouri's inaugural National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Celebration in October 2024. She received the 2023 Governor's Council on Disability's Annual Youth Leadership Award and the Senator Chuck Graham Memorial Disability and Advocacy Ambassador Award from the City of Columbia Disabilities Commission, acknowledging her exceptional contributions to the community. This recognition was followed by an invitation to deliver the keynote address at the Missouri Centers for Independent Living annual conference.

Here is Lydia's story...I have always believed that Deaf-Blindness is part of me, but it does not define me or stop me from achieving my dreams. I was born with a rare condition called Septo Optic Dysplasia which causes blindness. At age 7, we discovered that my right ear doesn't distinguish spoken words. After discussing with doctors and family members what taste and smell truly are, it was discovered that I was also born with no sense of smell and significantly limited sense of taste.

At school, I did not receive much of the support I needed to access classroom material, learn adaptive techniques for everyday tasks, and many other vital skills. I was fortunate that my mom took me to many classes during the weekends, as well as summer camps in St. Louis, Missouri, to learn the skills needed in order for me to live independently and manage the responsibilities of being a student. I also vividly recall my Grandma insisting that I learn how to read when I was in kindergarten and bribing me with M&M's. My family taught me the importance of advocacy and perseverance at a young age, and I am very grateful. I consider those skills to be my greatest strengths.

Once I graduated high school in 2019, I took advantage of quarantine time in 2020 during the pandemic to research adaptive techniques for independent living, assistive technology, and available tools and devices that could help me. In 2021, I went to Alphapointe, a blindness training and rehabilitation center, to continue building on the skills necessary for college and employment. While at Alphapointe, I learned about the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) in a drop down menu on a form. I investigated further and discovered that HKNC would be a great fit for providing the specific training I needed given my dual sensory loss.

It took a great deal of persuasion to encourage Rehabilitation Services for the Blind in Missouri to send me to New York for training, but I eventually began my training in 2022. The information and strategies they provided were exactly what I needed at the time to pursue my vocational and independent living aspirations.

I then attempted to study political science in college in Springfield, Missouri, but was unsuccessful due to the combination of almost no accommodations provided by the college and I contracted Covid which has severe long-term effects for me. The biggest

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6) **HELEN KELLER DEAF-BLIND AWARENESS WEEK**

challenge from Covid is that I now experience daily episodes of total deafness in both ears which simultaneously causes vertigo. As a result, I temporarily switched my focus to volunteer work and speaking engagements until I could get the necessary training and medical assistance to compensate for my total deafness starting and stopping unexpectedly.

While I was speaking at the Centers for Independent Living statewide conference, the director of Great Plains ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Center hired me on the spot as a consultant. I now assist the center with community trainings about the ADA, raising awareness about accessible recreation opportunities, and answering questions about the ADA from people with disabilities and the community as a whole. I also obtained my certification as an ADA Coordinator from the Center in 2024. ADA Coordinators are hired by businesses and government agencies to oversee their compliance with the law, as well as receive input from the public about the entity's accessibility.

Near the time I started working for Great Plains ADA Center, I became a student at Woodhaven EnCircle, which serves individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Shortly after joining the program, I was invited to teach some of their social skills and self-advocacy classes. Working with the students has taught me a great deal about how to communicate my message to a wide range of people with different learning styles. I find the work and advocacy I do for the disability community very rewarding.

While acquiring training for total Deaf-Blindness is still in progress, I know from my past life experience that I will find a way to overcome this challenge just as I have overcome others. My message to other Deaf-Blind individuals and people with other disabilities is to not let your disability stop you from pursuing your dreams. It definitely will not always be easy, but all the hard work and effort will be worthwhile in the end.



EXPLORE MISSOURI THIS SUMMER

by Claudia Browner

As summer arrives, many of us like to travel and explore the great outdoors. Missouri is home to a variety of travel destinations that cater to everyone, whether you're planning a day trip or an extended getaway. For fantastic ideas to kickstart your adventures, check out the online **Visit Missouri** travel guide. You can tailor your search to discover trip ideas, itineraries, and local festivals and events.

Plan your next vacation by visiting [VisitMo.com](https://www.visitmo.com)

If you have a passion for exploring state parks and historic sites, you can find valuable information and customize your travel plans on the **Missouri State Parks** website at mostateparks.com

The [Accessible Information by Park](#) webpage offers detailed insights into accessibility features available at each location.

Enjoy your next adventure and have a fun summer filled with the stunning sights and events that Missouri has to offer!



Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Steve Ahrens, Jefferson City
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
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Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Staff Members

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- Jennifer Pettit, Administrative Support Professional

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

June 15—18, 2025

[National ADA Symposium](#), Atlanta, Georgia

June 25—27, 2025

[Transition Training Institute](#), Columbia

July 15—19, 2025

[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#), Columbia

July 24—25, 2025

[Missouri APSE Employment Summit](#), Columbia

August 24—26, 2025

[Real Voices, Real Choices Conference](#), Lake Ozark

September 25, 2025

[Disability Inclusion Summit](#), Kansas City

October 16—17, 2025

[MACDDS Conference](#), Columbia

October 23, 2025

[Starkloff Disability Employment Summit](#), Kansas City

If you know of additional events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



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GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL
ON DISABILITY

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

GCD NEWSLETTER

Volume 11, Number 4, August 2025

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD HOSTS ANNUAL MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Reece Ellis



This July, the Governor's Council on Disability successfully completed the 21st annual Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) for high school students with disabilities. There's no universal way to measure success—not in life, and definitely not at MO-YLF. Some years, it's about the goals delegates set. Some years, it's about the connections they make. And some years, it's just about surviving the humidity and getting to the capitol in Jefferson City on time.

But if we did try to measure it, our week, July 15-19, 2025, might look something like this:

- ⇒ Over 36 miles traveled (about 83,845 steps) - that's about 10 miles more than a marathon
- ⇒ Enough donations to fill the bed *and* every seat in a full-sized pickup
- ⇒ 176 photobooth pictures
- ⇒ 160+ PowerPoint slides
- ⇒ 157 cold sandwiches
- ⇒ 136 slices of pizza
- ⇒ 129 minutes of talent show performances
- ⇒ 114 t-shirts
- ⇒ 73 bottles of Gatorade
- ⇒ 60 hours of programming
- ⇒ 55 cups of Tiger Stripe ice cream
- ⇒ 20 delegates
- ⇒ 9 sponsors
- ⇒ 8 facilitators
- ⇒ 7 team leaders
- ⇒ 6 community volunteers
- ⇒ 4 teams
- ⇒ 2 golf carts
- ⇒ 1 amazing week of self-advocacy, disability pride, and fun



(Continued on page 2)

GCD HOSTS ANNUAL MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

(Continued from page 1)

This year's Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, hosted by the Governor's Council on Disability, brought together 20 high school students with disabilities from across the state for a weeklong experience that's part leadership training, part personal development, and part summer camp. Held once again at the University of Missouri in Columbia, the MO-YLF gave delegates the opportunity to explore topics like disability history, advocacy, career readiness, and independent living; all while building lifelong friendships and laughing harder than any leadership manual ever prepares you for.

This year's keynote speaker was MO-YLF alumna Colleen Young, who returned to share her journey since she last addressed the forum. In 2024, she represented Team USA at the Paralympic Games in Paris, where she earned a bronze medal in the SB13 100m breaststroke. Her story of perseverance, focus, and pride in identity set the tone for the week.

Delegates participated in a full day at the State Capitol, where they explored the legislative process and held a mock bill hearing with the support of Senator Mike Bernskoetter (R-Jefferson City) and Representatives Kathy Steinhoff (D-Columbia), Raychel Proudie (D-Ferguson), Martin "Marty" Jacobs (D-Liberty), and Becky Laubinger (R-Park Hills), as well as legislative staff Penny Mueller, Trey Fauchaux, and Mark Cozart.

The week also included an adaptive sports night, hosted in partnership with the Mizzou Men's Wheelchair Basketball Team and the Venture Out program from the Mizzou Rec Center, giving delegates the chance to build confidence, trust, and teamwork in a high-energy, inclusive setting. For this year's community service project, delegates collected donations to support the WAGS Therapy Dog Program at MU Health Care—and were even treated to a visit from the therapy dogs themselves during the week.

On Friday, delegates took part in a College and Career Day organized by Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation, which included games, panel discussions, and practical tools to help them think about life after high school. The week wrapped up with a resource fair and graduation ceremony, where organizations from across the state shared information about services supporting independent living in the disability community. Delegates then had the opportunity to present their reflections from the week to their families, staff, and friends, ending the forum on the highest of high notes.

There was karaoke. There was dancing—some practiced, some spontaneous, all joyful. There were late-night conversations over delicious food, quiet moments of encouragement, and bright flashes of discovery. Delegates worked with mentors from the disability community, practiced public speaking, mapped out their goals, and learned how to grow into their leadership, their voice, and their place in their community.

Of course, none of this happens without a whole lot of planning and heart. Behind every activity and detail are alumni, facilitators, team leaders, volunteers, healthcare professionals, and community partners who make the week possible and meaningful.

Each year, MO-YLF sends students home a little more confident, a little more informed, and a little more connected. And for many, that's just the beginning.

Alumni often return in future years as staff and leaders, helping to carry forward a program that continues to grow and evolve—one delegate, one mentor, and one Olympic medal at a time.

To learn more about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, visit <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf/>



CALLING ALL ARTISTS, ADVOCATES, AND CREATIVES

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability is inviting you to participate in its Poster Contest in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Don't miss the **August 31 deadline** to participate.

This year is extra special as we celebrate 80 years of NDEAM, 35 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the powerful 2025 NDEAM theme: **Celebrating Value and Talent**

Your Challenge:

Design a poster that captures the spirit of disability inclusion in the workplace—highlighting the talent, value, and contributions of workers with disabilities. Whether you're a seasoned artist or a passionate newcomer, we want to see your vision of access and opportunity.

The winner will have their art featured during NDEAM events and across social media—and will help spread awareness about the importance of inclusive employment for people with disabilities.

How to enter: Submit your artwork and entry form by the August 31 deadline. Download the entry form and get detailed information at disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest/

Prizes & Recognition: The winning artwork will be featured on the GCD's 2025 NDEAM poster and shared statewide. The winner will be recognized at the NDEAM celebration event in Jefferson City in October.

This is more than a contest—it's a celebration of progress, pride, and potential. Let your creativity help shape the future of inclusive, accessible employment!

Governor's Council on
Disability

POSTER CONTEST



SUBMIT ENTRIES BY
AUGUST 31, 2025

CALLING ALL MISSOURI ARTISTS

Submit your creative work for a chance to be featured on the Governor's Council on Disability's 2025 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) poster.

The contest theme is **Celebrating Value and Talent** in honor of the 35th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

ADA35

FULL PARTICIPATION - EQUAL OPPORTUNITY -
INDEPENDENT LIVING - ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY



LEARN HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE AT
disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest

QUESTIONS? CALL
573-751-2600



SUMMER LEGISLATIVE HAPPENINGS

by Laura Mueth

Governor Kehoe has taken action on all General Assembly's Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed bills concerning disability related issues. Eleven are non-appropriation bills while four are appropriation bills. The four appropriation bills included vetoes of some money. You can view the letters explaining the vetoes at [Veto Letters](#). The bills signed by Governor Kehoe are [Senate Bill 43](#), [Senate Bill 218](#), [Senate Bill 63](#), [Senate Bill 68](#), [House Bill 567](#), [House Bill 594](#), [House Bill 419](#), [Senate Bill 79](#), [House Bill 595](#), [House bill 262](#), and [House Bill 737](#). To read press releases for these and the other bills signed by Governor Kehoe, see [Governor's office press releases](#). The final issue of the GCD's [Legislative Update](#) for the 2025 session summarizes the bills that were signed into law.



House and Senate committees and taskforces have held a few hearings this summer on various topics.

While our office does not follow federal activity as a part of our legislative publications and programs, the GCD has been and will continue to learn more regarding implementation of the federal budget reconciliation bill and its potential impacts on people with disabilities in Missouri.

The GCD will be releasing the annual Legislative Priorities Poll later this month. Please take time to complete it and share it with others. This provides us with a means to gather thoughts from many individuals throughout the state on a multitude of disability related topics. An announcement will be made through our email lists, social media, and website once it is available.

MEET THE GCD'S NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) is overseen by twenty Council members and a Chairperson. On June 27, 2025 Governor Kehoe reappointed five of the Governor's Council on Disability's (GCD) current Council members Wayne Crawford, Betty Davidson, Ron Hack (Chairperson), Katie Jones, and Sue Orton, and issued two new appointments, Aaron Durso and Jennifer Meyer.



Aaron Durso, of Taneyville currently serves as Bull Creek Village Clerk. He has previous experience as borough manager and the municipal authority manager in Birdsboro, Pennsylvania, and Senior Pastor at LOVE Christian Fellowship. A disabled veteran of the United States Air Force, Aaron was honorably discharged in 1993. He holds a Doctor of Ministry from Newburg Theological Seminary, Master of Ministry at Chesapeake Theological Seminary, and Bachelor of Religious Education at the University of Valley Forge.

Aaron moved to Missouri in 2019 with his wife Michelle of 32 years who is a special education teacher. He has two children and a service dog named Brody, who is a Seizure Response Service Dog. Aaron enjoys the outdoors and loves to archery hunt. Aaron states that it is important to his family to advocate for people with disabilities and that he is blessed to have a great support network of family and friends in his life.



Jennifer Meyer, of O'Fallon serves as principal at J. Meyer Strategies, a consulting group which entails political campaign work and corporate consulting work. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Missouri – St. Louis. Jennifer has worked in Missouri politics for over 25 years for officials including Senator Kit Bond, Senator Roy Blunt and Congressman Blaine Luetkemeyer. In addition to her professional experience, Jennifer serves as an executive board member for both the Freedom 13 and the North County Police Business Association

Jennifer lives in Winghaven in O'Fallon with her husband Andrew and three boys Ted, Henry and Spencer. Spencer is 19 years old and was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 3. Since that diagnosis, Jennifer has been involved in many programs in the St. Louis area which benefit people with disabilities and had done extensive research on autism working with doctors as well as using functional medicine to help Spencer live his best life. She is looking forward to working with the council and making a difference.

Congratulations on your appointments! The GCD team is looking forward to working with our new Council members and continuing our work with the reappointed members.

The GCD currently has five vacant Council member positions. If you are interested in serving on the Council, you may apply on the Boards and Commissions website at boards.mo.gov

NEWS AND UPDATES FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

by Claudia Browner

APSE MO Employment Summit—Empowering Excellence: Navigating the Future of Employment First



The Missouri chapter of the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE MO) hosted its annual conference on July 24-25, bringing together employment providers, employment professionals, families and individuals who support employment as an important component of self-determination. The conference offered keynote speakers and breakout sessions discussing best practices in advancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

I had the opportunity to represent the Governor's Council on Disability and Office of Equal Opportunity by participating in an employer panel discussion with colleagues from Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Mental Health—Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Behavioral Health, and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. In a session titled *Working Together, Working Forward: Advancing Employment for All* we discussed the efforts and strategies of state agencies to implement the Model Employer and Employment First legislation in Missouri government.

To learn more about the work of APSE MO, please visit the website at apsemissouri8.wildapricot.org

Missouri State Fair offers Disability Assistance, Military Appreciation Day, and Senior Appreciation Day



The annual Missouri State Fair will be held August 7—17 in Sedalia and offers many fun activities, shows, and entertainment.

Disability Assistance is provided to ensure all fairgoers can participate and enjoy the events. Check out the [Disability Assistance website](#) to learn about available accessibility features and accommodations.

Military Appreciation Day will be on August 10, featuring military appreciation events, a resource fair, and a concert by the 135th Army Band.

Senior Appreciation Day will be held on August 13, featuring senior activities including BINGO, line dancing, a dance contest, free health screenings, and reduced admissions.

Governor Michael L. Parson Arena Site Tours

This is a unique experience offered to fairgoers this year! Visitors can get a sneak peek at the construction site and chat with the contractors of the state-of-the-art arena that is scheduled to open in July 2026.

Tours are available August 8, 9, 14 and 15 between 9 AM and 1 PM.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

News and Updates for the Disability Community

The Ride Ahead—Film Screening with virtual Q&A



The St. Louis Arc, UMSL Office of Inclusive Postsecondary Education, and UMSL College of Education are hosting a screening of *The Ride Ahead*. Co-Directors Dan & Samuel Habib will join virtually after the screening for a Q&A session.

Date: September 3, 2025

Time: 6—8 PM

Where: UMSL Millennium Student Center, Century Room A
17 Arnold B Grobman Drive, St. Louis, MO 63121

All are welcome to attend and admission is free.

If you are unable to attend the screening at UMSL, you may also watch *The Ride Ahead* on PBS at pbs.org/pov/films/rideahead/

Second Annual NDEAM Celebration



The Office of Administration's Office of Equal Opportunity and Governor's Council on Disability will be hosting the second annual National Disability Employment Awareness Month—NDEAM celebration on Friday, October 10, 2025 at 11 AM at the Harry S Truman State Office Building in Jefferson City. The celebration will feature keynote speakers and entertainment as well as state agency resource exhibits. The event will be open to the public.

Additional details will be available soon at oeo.mo.gov/statewide-awareness-events-celebrations

2026 Disability Rights Legislative Day



Mark your calendars now for next year's Disability Rights Legislative Day (DRLD), held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026!

Hosted annually by a network of state agencies and disability organizations, DRLD brings together advocates from Missouri's disability community to engage with state legislators and hold a rally in the capitol rotunda.

More information will be available soon on the DRLD website at drlld.org

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September 21—23, 2025

[MO-CASE—Missouri Special Education Administrators Conference](#), Osage Beach

September 25, 2025

[Disability Inclusion Summit](#), Kansas City

October 16—17, 2025

[MACDDS Conference](#), Columbia

October 23, 2025

[Starkloff Disability Employment Summit](#), Kansas City

If you know of additional events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



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GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL
ON DISABILITY

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

GCD NEWSLETTER

Volume 11, Number 5, October 2025

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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Watch the [NDEAM video](#)

CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH

by Claudia Browner

This October marks the 80th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) — a momentous occasion to reflect on the progress made and renew our commitment to building work environments that welcome and support all individuals.

This year's theme, ***Celebrate Value and Talent***, emphasizes the meaningful impact and contributions individuals with disabilities bring to our state agencies, communities, and workplaces across the nation.

Established in 1945, NDEAM is led by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and observed every October. It serves as a national reminder that equal opportunity and access to meaningful employment are essential to a strong and talented workforce.

As a state government, we have a unique responsibility—and opportunity—to model inclusive employment practices. Hiring and retaining people with disabilities strengthens our teams, enhances service delivery, and reflects the communities we serve.

Across departments, employees with disabilities are making meaningful contributions and are delivering results in all areas of state government. By recognizing their value and talent, we build stronger, more innovative agencies.

To recognize NDEAM, state agencies, businesses and organizations are encouraged to:

- Host educational events and webinars highlighting disability awareness and accessibility.
- Provide training opportunities for hiring managers and supervisors on effective hiring and employment practices, and workplace accommodations for employees with disabilities.
- Host events or panels featuring employees with disabilities.
- Share success stories of employees with disabilities making a difference.
- Visit the GCD's [NDEAM web page](#) for additional resources and information.

Display NDEAM posters and resources to raise awareness among team members and the public. The [GCD's 2025 NDEAM poster](#) can be downloaded from our website or requested in print by [contacting the GCD](#).

Participate in the [statewide NDEAM celebration in Jefferson City](#), held on October 10

As we recognize 80 years of NDEAM, let us reaffirm our dedication to building a workplace culture that values every individual's abilities, perspectives, and contributions. Together, let's *Celebrate Value and Talent* — this month, and every month.



GCD NAMES NDEAM POSTER CONTEST WINNER

by Reece Ellis

Evelyn Johnson, a senior at Affton High School in St. Louis County, has been named this year's winner of the Governor's Council on Disability's (GCD) annual poster contest. Her thoughtful and vibrant artwork, titled "Bruised Fruit is Still Edible," beautifully captures the spirit of October's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), a time dedicated to promoting a welcoming work environment and celebrating the valuable contributions of workers with disabilities. Her winning design will be featured statewide throughout the month.

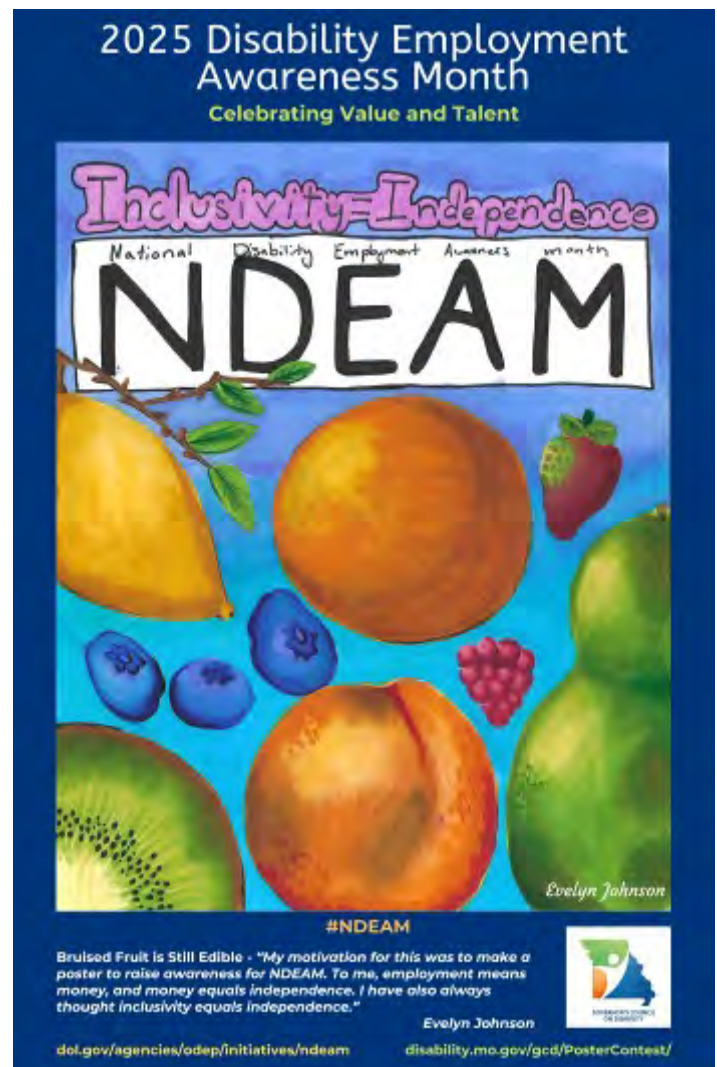
Evelyn's passion for art is a lifelong one, passed down from her mother, who is a painter. "I've been doing art as long as I can remember," she said. When asked about her inspiration for the winning poster, Evelyn explained, "I've always loved drawing fruit, it's probably my favorite thing to illustrate. My teacher told me about the contest, and it all just came together. Title and all."

The poster contest was introduced to Evelyn by one of her teachers who saw her artwork and encouraged her to enter. When she found out she had won, Evelyn was ecstatic. "I was so excited, I actually screamed," she shared. While drawing is a big part of her life, Evelyn's artistic interests are diverse. She enjoys many different types of art, including painting, drawing, and bracelet making. However, her favorite form of art is pottery. She estimates that she spends at least 25% of her free time on art, even when she has other things she should be doing.

Beyond art, Evelyn's hobbies include baking and playing video games. A fan of the game Stardew Valley, she recently achieved "perfection," a rare and difficult accomplishment. This feat is so challenging that it is only reached by about 0.8% of the millions of players and requires completing several time-consuming tasks, which can easily take upwards of 200 hours.

Evelyn also shared that she has autism spectrum disorder, which she was diagnosed with at age 13. The diagnosis was an eye-opener for her, helping her understand some of the struggles she had faced throughout her life without a clear explanation. Evelyn, who hopes to become a professional artist or art teacher, offered some words of encouragement to other students who want to explore their creativity. "Just do it," she advised. "It's fun. You don't need fancy materials. You can just take a pencil and a piece of paper." She likened it to writing, but with pictures, and emphasized the importance of practice, stating, "eventually you'll get better."

This October, Evelyn's artwork will be on display as part of NDEAM, sharing her talent and a powerful message of inclusion. The Governor's Council on Disability is proud to recognize her creativity and hard work. Congratulations, Evelyn!



GOVERNOR KEHOE ISSUES NDEAM PROCLAMATION

BY CLAUDIA BROWNER

In recognition of the 80th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), Governor Mike Kehoe has issued a proclamation designating the month of October 2025 as Disability Employment Awareness Month in Missouri.

The proclamation, along with additional information and resources related to NDEAM is available on the Disability Portal at disability.mo.gov/NDEAM.htm

STATE OF MISSOURI HOSTS NDEAM CELEBRATION AND RESOURCE EVENT

BY CLAUDIA BROWNER



The State of Missouri's second statewide annual **NDEAM Celebration and Resource Event** will be held on Friday, October 14, from 11 AM—12 PM at the Harry S Truman Building in Jefferson City.

Hosted by the Office of Administration's Office of Equal Opportunity and the Governor's Council on Disability, this event offers an excellent opportunity for state team members to connect with colleagues, employers, and advocates to learn about employment resources, network, and celebrate the successes of people with disabilities in the workforce.

The program features keynote presentations, recognition of the GCD NDEAM Poster Contest winner, and musical entertainment.

State agencies and disability organizations will provide exhibit tables to share resources, assistive device demonstrations, and information from 10:30 AM—12:30 PM.

The event is free and open to the public. All are welcome to attend.

STATE OF MISSOURI TALENT SHOWCASE COMING TO SIKESTON

BY CLAUDIA BROWNER

Join the State of Missouri for a Talent Showcase event in Sikeston! On October 14, 2025, from 2—4 PM, job seekers have the opportunity to step away from the typical job fair experience! The in-person talent showcase is a unique opportunity for job seekers to demonstrate their skills firsthand and find a career where they can truly thrive.



Job seekers are invited to:

- Create a display or presentation to highlight their skills, achievements and experience, in addition to providing resumes.
- Engage in meaningful conversations with State of Missouri recruiters from various departments.
- Receive professional resume support.
- Participate in mock interviews.

This hiring opportunity reflects the State of Missouri's commitment to ensure all job seekers can successfully and effectively engage with state government recruiters.

Job seeker registration is required as space is limited.

For more information and to register contact HiringEvents@oa.mo.gov

NEW MISSOURI LAW EXPANDS HEARING AID AND COCHLEAR IMPLANT COVERAGE

by Reece Ellis

A new law signed by Governor Kehoe will expand MO HealthNet coverage to provide hearing aids and medically necessary cochlear implants for all eligible persons. The legislation, which was included in the omnibus healthcare package, Senate Bill 79, and originated as House Bill 177, received strong bipartisan support from the state legislature. [The Senate package passed with a vote of 24-6, and the House vote was 147-1.](#)

Previously, MO HealthNet only covered hearing aids for children, pregnant women, and blind individuals. The new law authorizes coverage for all eligible persons. Proponents of the bill described it as a compassionate measure that addresses existing obstacles for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. Hearing aids and cochlear implants are described as necessities, not luxuries.



Testimony from supporters highlighted how the ability to hear and communicate is critical to a person's independence and quality of life. Representative Cameron Parker (R-Campbell), who sponsored the bill, shared the story of a constituent who lost their job after turning 18 and being unable to afford repairs for their hearing aids, which caused them to lose their independence. The new law is expected to help over 15,000 Missourians who are hard of hearing.

The fiscal note for the legislation estimates the total cost over three years to be approximately \$13 million, with Missouri's portion at about \$3.16 million and the rest coming from federal funding. The cost of a single hearing aid can range from \$1,000 to \$4,000, which proponents testified is a barrier for individuals whose annual income may be below the \$21,597 cap to qualify for Medicaid.

With this change, Missouri joins 37 other states that offer comprehensive Medicaid coverage for hearing aids and cochlear implants for adults.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

by Kim Hicks, Office of Equal Opportunity



October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the impact of breast cancer and supporting those affected by it. This annual campaign encourages individuals to educate themselves and others about the importance of early detection, screening, and treatment options.

Breast cancer remains one of the most common cancers worldwide, affecting millions of women and men. By wearing pink, participating in events, and sharing information, we can empower one another to take proactive measures for our health and wellbeing. Regular mammograms and self-examinations are crucial steps that can lead to early detection and improve chances for successful treatment and survival.

This month, let us honor those who have battled breast cancer, celebrate survivors, and support ongoing research to find a cure. Together, we can foster a community of awareness, compassion, and hope.

Get involved by attending local events, donating to research, or simply spreading the word. Every effort counts in the fight against breast cancer!



DISABILITY INCLUSION SUMMIT—DIVING DEEPER, TAKING ACTION

by Claudia Browner

The 2025 Disability Inclusion Summit, hosted by the Center for Disability Inclusion in Kansas City this September, brought together corporate leaders, disability inclusion champions, and industry experts for two powerful days of learning, action, and connection.

Under the theme *Diving Deeper, Taking Action*, the summit centered on advancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities, sharing practical strategies and proven approaches for turning commitment into meaningful change.

Keynotes and breakout sessions explored accessible hiring practices, inclusive leadership, and creating workplaces where everyone is treated with dignity and has the opportunity to thrive.

A highlight of the event was the vendor exhibit, which showcased disability-owned businesses and organizations led by or serving the disability community. Even the catering was intentionally sourced from businesses that actively employ people with disabilities—demonstrating that equal opportunity can be built into every detail, from policy decisions to procurement and daily operations.

The summit left attendees reenergized, motivated and with a clear message that real progress requires thoughtful action at every level, not just in planning, but in how organizations operate, hire, and engage.



GCD LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL NOW OPEN

by Laura Mueth

Do you have disability-related concerns or topics you are passionate about? Share them with us and help raise awareness with state legislators, elected officials, and our agency.

One way to do that is by filling out the GCD's 2025 Legislative Priorities Poll. The topic areas of the poll are accessibility, education, assistance services and healthcare, housing, employment, and transportation.

All available formats can be found on the [Annual Legislative Priorities Poll](#) web page. Our staff is available to assist anyone who has difficulty understanding the questions or completing it independently. To receive assistance, call 800-877-8249.

Please return all Polls by **5:00 p.m. Monday, November 3, 2025**. Online versions are submitted directly to our office. All other versions can be returned via fax (573-526-4109), email (gcd@oa.mo.gov), and mail (Governor's Council on Disability, 301 West High Street, Room 620, PO Box 1668, Jefferson City, MO 65102-1668).

The results will be shared by the end of this year.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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October 4, 2025

[**FestAbility, St. Louis**](#)

October 10, 2025

[**Statewide NDEAM Celebration, Jefferson City**](#)

October 14, 2025

[**State of Missouri Talent Showcase Hiring Event, Sikeston**](#)

October 16—17, 2025

[**MACDDS Conference, Columbia**](#)

October 21—22, 2025

[**Brain Injury Association BIA-MO Annual Statewide Conference, St. Louis**](#)

October 23, 2025

[**Starkloff Disability Employment Summit, St. Louis**](#)

November 14, 2025

[**Statewide Veterans Day Celebration, Jefferson City**](#)

If you know of additional events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



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GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL
ON DISABILITY

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

GCD NEWSLETTER

Volume 11, Number 6, December 2025

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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HONORING CHANGEMAKERS—NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN FOR ANNUAL GCD AWARDS

by Claudia Browner

Each year, the Governor's Council on Disability's annual Inclusion and Youth Leadership Awards honor the remarkable individuals and organizations driving progress in disability inclusion and youth leadership. These prestigious awards celebrate Missourians who break barriers, create opportunities, and inspire positive change in their communities—and we need your help to identify them.

Do you know a young leader in the disability community who is using their voice to make a difference? An educator, professional, advocate or organization advancing equal opportunities and accessibility for people with disabilities? **Now is the time to nominate them.**

This is your opportunity to shine a spotlight on leaders who champion accessibility, mentor young people, foster inclusive environments, or spark transformative initiatives. Their impact matters, and their stories deserve to be told.

Share the achievements, contributions, and actions of someone who has made a meaningful difference in the lives of people with disabilities. By uplifting exceptional leaders, we amplify their work and empower others to strengthen our movement toward equal opportunities and full participation for people with disabilities.

The **Inclusion Award** (34th year) criteria and nomination form are available on the [Inclusion Awards](#) web page.

The **Youth Leadership Award** (13th year) criteria and nomination form are available on the [Youth Leadership Awards](#) web page.

Don't wait—the nomination deadline is January 31!

Submit your nominations now to recognize those whose work deserves to be celebrated!

Nominations now open for the Governor's Council on Disability's

2025 Inclusion Awards

Nominations due **January 31, 2026**

Recognizing leaders in Inclusion



disability.mo.gov/gcd/inclusionawards (573) 751-2600

Nominations now open for the Governor's Council on Disability's

2025 Youth Leadership Awards

Nominations due **January 31, 2026**

Recognizing leaders in Youth Leadership



disability.mo.gov/gcd/youthleadershipawards (573) 751-2600

WHAT'S AHEAD: KEY LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES 2025—2026 by Laura Mueth

As 2025 concludes and we look ahead to 2026, the Governor's Council on Disability continues three important legislative activities: the Legislative Priorities Poll was completed and results were finalized, the Legislative Education Project (LEP) webinars are open for registration, and the GCD is collaborating with partnering agencies in the planning of Disability Rights Legislative Day (DRLD).

2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL RESULTS

The Legislative Priorities Poll ended November 3. Three hundred forty-six people answered the questions. Based on the results, the 2026 legislative priorities for the GCD will be:

- The State of Missouri updating websites to include more language that is direct and easy to understand for those with reading or writing difficulties
- The Personal Care Attendant/Aide workforce providing critical services
- Funding needs
- Transportation needs

The first two priorities were determined by combining the two highest strongly agree and agree response percentages. The remaining two are need areas expressed throughout all the open response questions.

Again this year, an interactive dashboard and a written report showing the results for all the questions will be posted soon on the [Annual Legislative Priorities Poll page](#). Last year's dashboard as well as reports from previous years are also available on the web page.

This information will also be shared with representatives, senators, and additional elected officials later this month prior to the beginning of the legislative session. Thank you to everyone who participated this year.

2026 LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION PROJECT WEBINARS

Legislative Education Project webinars will be offered four times in 2026 at no cost to participants. The format and content will be the same each time. The topics covered will be the legislative process, communicating with legislators, and current state bills related to disability. Webex software will be used to conduct each webinar. The dates and times are listed below. Registration is required.

Please complete the [LEP webinars registration form](#) to register.

- January 8, 2026, 9:00-10:30 AM
- February 5, 2026, 9:00-10:30 AM
- March 5, 2025, 9:00-10:30 AM
- March 26, 2025, 1:00-2:30 PM

Scan the QR code to register





LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION PROJECT WEBINARS



REGISTER ONLINE

<https://tinyurl.com/GCD-LEP>

Learn about the legislative process in Missouri and how to become active in creating positive public policies for people with disabilities.
<https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/LEP.htm>

This information can also be found on the [LEP web page](#).

DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY EVENT PLANNING

Planning for the 25th Disability Rights Legislative Day on February 25, 2026 is underway. While the rally will occur from 11:00 to noon and is what many attendees look forward to, the entire day is designed for people with disabilities, their families, and others to share what is important to them with representatives and senators. Make sure your voice is heard.

Begin considering now which legislators you want to visit with while you are attending the event. Legislative offices will become more active throughout this month as pre-filing of bills occurs with the legislative session beginning in January. This could be a great time to contact those offices to share that you will be attending and would like to schedule a visit on that day. While the agenda has not been finalized, there will be time before and after the rally to meet with legislators.

If you want to be involved with the rally, applications to be a speaker will be accepted beginning later this month. The application process information will be available at [DRLD Rally Speaker](#).

If you are someone with lived experience of a disability and are interested in assisting on the day of the event, applications for the DRLD Access Team along with criteria and responsibility/role information will be available at [DRLD Access Team](#). As planning progresses and more details are solidified, the [DRLD website](#) will be updated.



STATEWIDE NDEAM CELEBRATION

by Reece Ellis

The Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) and the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) hosted the statewide National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) celebration on Friday, October 10. The celebration presented the achievements of various professionals, emphasizing their journey to securing roles in government and business.

The celebration featured music provided by Kapital Kicks Big Band. It also provided team members with direct insights from seasoned experts. Brian Nevins, a Transportation Engineer for the Federal Highway Administration and frequent Missouri Youth Leadership Forum mentor, served as the keynote speaker. Nevins spoke about overcoming career barriers after acquiring a disability. He detailed how assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation allowed him to pursue a career in engineering. He stressed that when people with disabilities are given opportunity, workplaces become more innovative and reflective of the world.

Attendees also heard from Seyoon Choi, Sr. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind at the Department of Social Services. Choi is a recipient of the GCD's 2021 Youth Leadership Award. He gained employment with the State after attending the Office of Administration's Talent Showcase. This hiring event showcases candidate skills directly, providing a clear path to career growth within state government.

The program featured exhibitors who provide assistive resources and practical tools for job seekers and current state team members.

The GCD also recognized the winner of the annual poster contest, Evelyn Johnson, a senior at Affton High School. Her thoughtful artwork is titled "Bruised Fruit is Still Edible". This design, which promotes a welcoming work environment and celebrates the valuable contributions of workers with disabilities, was featured statewide in October. The artist reminds us that perceived imperfections do not diminish inherent value.

The GCD looks forward to supporting and expanding these efforts to promote employment advancement across the state. We thank all who supported the event and champion this important work.



APPLY NOW! APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Reece Ellis

The annual application season for the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) is here! The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) announces that applications are now open for the 2026 session.

We invite high school students with disabilities, ages 16-21, to apply for this five-day, four-night leadership experience. The MO-YLF is a no-cost program designed to help young leaders cultivate leadership, citizenship, and social skills. Delegates gain skills, connect with mentors, and experience life on a college campus at the University of Missouri in Columbia.

The 2026 MO-YLF will take place from July 14-18, 2026, at the University of Missouri in Columbia. Students must submit their applications by the **March 16, 2026** deadline. The program operates at no cost to selected delegates, thanks to the support of generous sponsors and donors. All necessary accommodations and personal care needs are provided to participants.

During this week, delegates focus on engaging activities that deliver critical leadership and transition skills. Students participate in workshops that cover key areas like self-advocacy, goal setting, and self-determination. They explore the history of disability rights and culture while connecting with successful mentors.

The program focuses heavily on readiness for life after high school. Delegates receive resources to prepare for a successful transition to higher education, employment, and independent living.

Beyond the structured learning, the week promotes social development. Participants form networks with peers and young leaders from the disability community, and enjoy recreation, including adaptive sports and social events like a talent show and dance.

The GCD is hosting several free informational webinars for delegates, parents, and partners. This is the time to get questions answered directly by the MO-YLF team. The first webinar is scheduled for December 3, 2025. Additional dates are set throughout December, January, February, and March.

Students should apply early.

Learn more and start your application today at: <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf/>



MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

July 14 - 18, 2026

University of Missouri
in Columbia, MO



The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is designed for young adults with disabilities to learn from successful leaders and role models.

Participants gain knowledge about leadership styles, develop self-determination skills, and learn about the disability community and disability laws, and the legislative process.

The MO-YLF equips students with the tools to achieve their post-secondary goals in education, employment, and independent living; All while having fun and making lifelong friends!

Application Deadline is March 16, 2026!

[Learn more and apply at disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf](https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf)

Questions? 573-751-2600 gcd@oa.mo.gov

Are you interested in learning more about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum?

Join us for an informational webinar

REGISTER NOW



December 3, 2025	10:30 - 11:30 AM
December 11, 2025	2:00 - 3:00 PM
January 9, 2026	1:30 - 2:30 PM
January 26, 2026	5:00 - 6:00 PM
February 10, 2026	5:30 - 6:30 PM
February 11, 2026	11:30 - 12:30 PM
March 12, 2026	4:00 - 5:00 PM

Register at
<https://tinyurl.com/2026-moylf-webinars>




MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

More information at
disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf

If you have any questions, please contact us at
573.751.2600 or gcd@oa.mo.gov

STATEWIDE VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION HONORS PUBLIC SERVICE

by Reece Ellis

On Thursday, November 13, 2025, the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) hosted the annual Statewide Veterans Day Celebration in collaboration with the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) and other state agencies. The celebration emphasized the value of veterans' experience within the state workforce. Veterans bring critical organization and discipline, which support the state's mission to serve its citizens.

The ceremony took place in the Harry S Truman Building's auditorium from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The program began with the Posting of the Colors by the Smith-Cotton JROTC. Claudia Browner, Director of the GCD and Acting Director of OEO, delivered the welcoming remarks and read the Veterans Day Proclamation issued by Governor Mike Kehoe.

The program featured remarks from three distinguished speakers:

- Missouri State Representative David Griffith, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans
- Dr. Matthew Naylor, Director and CEO of the National WWI Museum and Memorial
- Major General Charles D. Hausman, Adjutant General of the Missouri National Guard



The program concluded with a message from Missouri State Treasurer Vivek Malek. Treasurer Malek updated attendees on the MO-ABLE program and shared information regarding unclaimed property, specifically mentioning the hundreds of service medals held by the state.

The Smith-Cotton JROTC Drill Team then returned to perform their final routine. Veteran service organizations supported the event, setting up tables to provide state team members with resources. Attendees had lunch options from two veteran-owned and operated food trucks—Hall's Kitchen and Mr. Murphy's Stuffed Potatoes.



The GCD appreciates the continuous service veterans give to Missouri. Veterans secured the nation, and they now contribute their knowledge to serving Missouri citizens. Their discipline and leadership are essential to the effective operation of government.

The Governor's Council on Disability thanks all veterans for their service to our country.

GCD MILESTONES AND MOMENTS WORTH CELEBRATING

by Claudia Browner

As we wind down another fast-moving year, it is the perfect time to pause and reflect on everything our team has accomplished together. This has been a year defined by collaboration, resilience, and meaningful milestones. Whether it was working on our programs and initiatives, streamlining internal processes, or celebrating personal and professional achievements, each success tells the story of a team committed to growth and excellence.

Just as important as the goals we reached are the team members who helped us reach them. Thank you for bringing your best—your creativity, problem-solving, kindness, and commitment to showing up for each other. Recognition isn't limited to major accomplishments, it's also found in the everyday wins, the support offered behind the scenes, and the willingness to adapt and push forward.

As we look to the coming year, we carry forward the lessons learned and the momentum built. Together, we'll set new goals, identify opportunities to innovate, and continue to strengthen the foundation we've created.

Here's to closing out the year with pride—and stepping into the next year with purpose and excitement.

In October, GCD team member Jenn Pettit was recognized with the OA CARES award for her great customer service and contributions to the team. Jenn serves as the Lead Administrative Professional for the Governor's Council on Disability and also supports the Office of Equal Opportunity team. Members of the GCD and Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) joined the award celebration recognizing Jenn's accomplishments.



Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist for the GCD, was recognized with the Professional Leadership Development Award for consistently being a top performer of the agency, which allows him to participate in an upcoming professional development opportunity.



Claudia Browner reached a milestone in November, when she celebrated her 20-year work anniversary with the GCD and 32 years with the State of Missouri.



Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist for the GCD, celebrates her 15-year work anniversary with the agency in December.



The OEO and GCD team held a very successful fundraiser to support the Missouri State Employees Charitable Campaign (MSECC). Together, the team served more than 100 nacho dinners, selling out in about 45 minutes and raising close to \$1,300 for two local charities.

OEO team member Kim Hicks leads the statewide MSECC campaign for the State of Missouri government.



To close out the year and plan ahead for 2026, GCD and OEO team members participated in a strategic planning meeting that included team building activities and a tour of the Office of Administration's Document Solutions facility.

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Steve Ahrens, Jefferson City
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Aaron Durso, Taneyville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Jennifer Meyer, O'Fallon
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Jason Schott, Ste. Genevieve
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Administrative Support Professional

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

February 2—4, 2026

[Winter ADA Coordinator Conference](#), hosted by the Great Plains ADA Center (virtual)

February 22, 2026

[Disability Awareness Convention](#), hosted by The Arya Foundation, Chesterfield

February 25, 2026

[Disability Rights Legislative Day](#), Jefferson City

July 14—18, 2026

[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#), Columbia

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



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